

# 'Jackal' writer includes human emotions in 'Phantom' sequel

By MARY CAMPBELL

NEW YORK (AP) — Frederick Forsyth has been chided for not having romance and warm human beings in his novels.

"Well," he says in defense, "spies, assassins and mercenaries are chilly people." But the latest book by the author of "The Day of the Jackal" contains love and warmth, even spirituality.

He got the idea for the novel two years ago while talking to musical theater composer Andrew Lloyd Webber. It's "The Phantom of Manhattan," set in 1906, a sequel to Gaston Leroux's book and Lloyd Webber's musical "The Phantom of the Opera."

"Gaston Leroux gave him a ravaged face, Andrew a heart and I've given him a soul," Forsyth says during lunch in a favorite Manhattan French bistro.

During a dinner with their wives, Forsyth says he and Lloyd Webber "got to musing as to whatever happened to the Phantom, Erik. At the end of the musical he walks into the shadows of the Paris Opera and disappears. Andrew said he'd never worked it out."

When Forsyth got home that evening, he began to think about it. "I hadn't seen the musical in 11 years. I went back and saw it again. I'd never read the book. I read that. I got intrigued."

Forsyth and Lloyd Webber had lunch and talked. "Andrew had a couple of suggestions. He didn't think Erik could exist in France any more. He would have to emigrate and why not New York. I went home, mulled on it some more."

But he didn't want to continue the theme of Erik loving Christine and Christine not loving him in return. So he created a new element — a son.

"It sounds pretentious but I wanted to give it some spiritual element," Forsyth

says. "Out of that came the notion of two characters vying for Erik's soul. They're his right hand man, Darius, the dedicated servant of the god of greed, which equals the devil, and Father Joe, the boy's tutor, vying for his soul for God."

"By the midsection of the book, the subtext is about the redemption of a man who was lost. Through love he comes back to the land of the living. He knows his love

of a woman has been rejected. Through the love of the boy he comes back from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive again."

Forsyth was especially attracted to spirituality in the book because when he was young, he was an atheist. "As years went by, I became an agnostic. Many years went by. There had to be an almighty God somewhere. The alternative is a howling wilderness of chaos," the 61-year-old British author says.

If this book doesn't sell, Forsyth says he will stay away from spiritual themes and human emotions in future books.

"The Phantom of Manhattan" required Forsyth to do extensive research on old New York. He found the archivist of Brooklyn especially helpful.

"He solved a problem for me. Where does Erik come ashore? Ellis Island would have turned him back. In those years Coney Island was a kind of Wild West, a lawless gangster society. There was extensive gambling, numerous brothels and fun fairs with freaks. Where do you hide a grain of sand? On the beach. Erik looks around a bonfire and realizes they're all freaks. Nobody objects to him."

Forsyth said both he and Leroux started as journalists. But Leroux wrote 60 books in 20 years after he retired and Forsyth has written nine in 27 years.

"His 'Phantom of the Opera' came out in spring 1911 and was dead by summer," Forsyth says. When Hollywood was looking for a vehicle for Lon Chaney, after "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," somebody suggested the monster in "Phantom." It became his second movie.

Forsyth came out of the Air Force, worked three years on a provincial newspaper, then four years for Reuters, in Paris, Germany, Rome and Brussels. He was with the BBC two and a half years and left over a disagreement about covering the war in Biafra.

He wrote a book, "The Biafra Story," then decided to write a novel because he had covered the story in Paris in 1962 and 1963 when there was a plot to assassinate Charles de Gaulle. Forsyth wrote "The Day of the Jackal" off the top of his head and had only two envelopes with notes scrawled on the back when Boston University asked him to donate his research notes. The Jackal was a composite of three men he'd met, a secret agent, a chess player who thought 10 jumps ahead and an assassin.

Published in 1971, "The Day of the Jackal" has sold about 10 million copies in 28 languages. Forsyth's agent, who also sold insurance, sent it to four publishers who rejected it. After nine months, Forsyth took the book back and wrote an 18-page synopsis. He took that to Harold Harris at Hutchinson, whom he'd met at a cocktail party. Harris read it but said it was unethical for him to read the manuscript if another publisher had it. Forsyth took a taxi to the publisher who had it. The manuscript was unread, was still in its wrapping paper, and Forsyth took it to Harris.

Three days later Harris gave the agentless writer a contract in which Forsyth retained movie and serialization rights, got 12.5 percent royalty and agreed to write two more books.

Harris asked for two synopses within a week. Assuring Harris he was brimming with ideas though he had none, Forsyth wondered what else he knew about. He'd heard a rumor of a Nazi escape organization called Odessa and he knew mercenaries in West Africa who did sabotage missions. Those became "The Odessa File" and "The Dogs of War."

All of Forsyth's novels have been written in the same way: He knew every detail before he started writing and he typed with two fingers on an electric typewriter.



Frederick Forsyth

## Family living — books



Dear Abby

## Widow torn between living in past or planning for future

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Wayne," and I met in high school. After high school, our friendship grew deeper and we fell in love. We married and had three beautiful children together who are now 10, 8 and 5. I thought we would have a bright future together and watch our children grow.

Two years ago, he began experiencing unusual symptoms and went to see his doctor. We learned days later that he had leukemia. For a year and a half, Wayne fought to survive. Unfortunately, it was not to be. I lost my friend, my husband and the father of my children.

I am now a 35-year-old widow, raising my children alone. I am trying to do the best I can without him.

Wayne told me during his illness that he didn't want another man to raise our

says, "Thank you" — he has to say, "Thann (not thank) you very much." He even wore his wraparound dark Elvis glasses to his brother's wake and funeral, along with stage makeup and an outfit as close as he could get to look like Elvis. And no, he had NOT just come from a "gig." This WAS his "gig" for the week!

The mother's signature says it all. "Protective Little Mama" is what Elvis' mother was, and I do believe that she considers herself Elvis' mom and enjoys the attention as much as he does. Give me a break!

Most entertainers are professionals and leave the showbiz behind after work. This Elvis wannabe probably does his act all day and all night — and that's where the problem really lies. Even Dolly Parton says she goes to the grocery store and no one recognizes her.

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